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# A-LEVEL HISTORY

7042/2R: The Cold War, c1945-1991  
Report on the Examination

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## General

In this year's examination, the majority of students once again showed that they understood the demands of question 01 and they used their time to the full to write substantial answers. Of the essay questions, 03 was the most popular followed by 04. Question 02 was slightly less popular but there was, nevertheless, a range of answers to all essay questions and there was little indication that students were pressed for time to complete their answers.

The comments which follow are indicative of some of the strengths and weaknesses commonly seen in students' answers in this session.

## Question 01

For question 01, students need to evaluate the value of the sources for the purpose specified in the question – in this case for a historian investigating the reasons for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. This requires an evaluation of the provenance and also of the content of each source in order to establish both its values and the limitations for the purpose set out in the question.

Many students dealt with the provenance of each source first before moving on to an evaluation of the content. This approach worked well, as long as the students had fully read and understood the content of the source before starting to write. This is necessary to fully appreciate the context of the source and to avoid making generalised, stock comments on the provenance which have no relation to the source's specific origin, purpose or content. For example, in Source A some answers started by saying that as the source was a memorandum it was likely to be 'official' and therefore truthful and so valuable. However, the content of the source reveals that the Soviets are not telling the whole truth and that the purpose of this memorandum is clearly to reassure the Americans to prevent them from intervening. An appreciation of this before starting the answer would help some students be more analytical in their approach to the provenance.

Most students had a sound contextual knowledge of Soviet actions and motives in Eastern Europe generally which helped them to evaluate the content of the sources. The most effective answers, however, were able to use more precise knowledge of events surrounding the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion to highlight, for example, the limitations of the content of Sources A and C in explaining Soviet motives. There was excellent understanding shown by many students of the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on the provenance and content of Source B; however the most effective answers also were able to identify that, although Source B was overtly hostile to the Soviets, the content regarding Soviet motives and actions in Eastern Europe was in fact quite accurate and thus valuable.

Students need to be reminded that they should evaluate the sources for the purpose given in the question only. Some students argued that Source A was valuable because it showed an improved relationship between the Soviets and the US or that Source B was valuable for showing the Sino-Soviet split. These points were not answering the question; all evaluation needed to link to the value and limitations of the sources for showing the motives of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Overall, most students were able to demonstrate 'some understanding' of provenance and content and some awareness of the historical content which is required for level three. However, there were some who focused too much on content at the expense of provenance or vice versa, and there were some whose lack of contextual knowledge kept them in the lower levels of the mark

scheme. At the top end there was some very good understanding of the provenance and content in context, which resulted in very high marks. However, it is important that contextual knowledge is clearly linked to the source and to the question. The answer must be driven by the sources.

### **Question 02**

This question required students to consider the impact of US policies in Asia between 1953 and 1959.

At the top end, students identified the policy aims of the US in Asia and used these as a way of assessing success and failure. The most effective also covered a range of areas/conflicts in Asia where the US was involved – the end of the Korean war, attitude to China including the incidents over Taiwan, continued support of Japan and events in the Vietnam War.

Some students wrote about events out of the time period, for example events in Korea and China before 1953. Quite a few students also focused on the wrong time period for Vietnam and wrote about the difficulties faced by the US troops in fighting the Vietcong. Vietnam is a complex topic in its own right and it is recommended that students review Vietnam as a discreet topic so that they understand the changes and continuities in US policy towards Vietnam between 1950 and 1974 and the actions taken by each President.

The drawing up of timelines, for events in different regions and for different conflicts, is one strategy that could help students get a handle of chronology so that they can more effectively focus their answers on the dates given in essay questions.

### **Question 03**

This question generated a wide range of answers, including some excellent, well-argued responses.

At the lower end, some students wrote a narrative of events relating to the Cuban crisis or failed to link the actions of the US and USSR in Cuba to how these actually caused the 'crisis'.

However, there many excellent answers which analysed the impact of US actions towards Cuba after 1959 in pushing Cuba into the arms of the Soviets and in suggesting that another US invasion of Cuba was imminent. Many students also raised the issue of Kennedy going public and thus helping to create much more of a 'crisis' situation. There was also a good understanding, shown by many students, that the actions of the USSR towards Cuba were very provocative to the US and could not be tolerated by any US president.

The more effective answers had a clear judgement which they set out in their introduction and were able to justify in their essay.

### **Question 04**

The question focused on the significance of economic problems in the USSR and the satellite states and how far these explained the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe

Most students had an understanding that the USSR and the satellite states were struggling economically by 1989 – though some lacked precise detail to support this. Many students were also able to link Gorbachev's policies regarding perestroika to the economic problems and to

explain that Gorbachev's reforms exacerbated the economic crisis. The answers that gave specific examples from the satellite states of economic problems faced by these states scored higher marks.

For balance, students examined a range of issues; the role of glasnost in undermining communist rule and Gorbachev's reforms, the impact of the 'Sinatra' Doctrine, the role of Reagan's policies pre 1985 in putting pressure on the USSR, and the growing political dissatisfaction within the satellite states. There was thus a wide range of responses – many of which were a pleasure to read.

As with all of the essays, high level answers used precise and detailed evidence to support arguments and reach an overall judgement based on this evidence.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.